



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



STUDENT VETERAN SERVICES

Before my semester began I took a trip with Outward Bound. The sailing trip was for beginners with little to no experience and it was around the Florida Keys. I've always loved being at sea and being a prior service member in the US Navy - it felt refreshing to work with other veterans on the open seas to achieve a common goal of being underway.

Onboard were service veterans that varied in age from me being the youngest (25) to 60 years old. I walked away from the experience with friends that I could always count on. The program is free to veterans because Outward Bound is devoted to helping service members open up about their experiences and work in a team – which can be very healing.

The sailing took place on an exposed boat in which from sunrise to sunset, from eating to sleeping (and even relieving yourself) takes place within close proximity. It's not for the faint hearted, raging winds force the waves to crash into the boat - one slip on the cluttered floor can mean a missing tooth or bruised chin. The course teaches students to use only the wind and oars for propulsion. In addition, the instructors provide lessons on how to read charts, steer sails, compass navigation, small boat seamanship and weather observation.

The course was an adventure that will remain etched in my memory - from the sleepless nights to the warm meals around a dimly lit fire fueled by propane. The people and the stories will always be near my heart. Outward Bound always has new events that are being scheduled. For more information about VITAL or to attend the upcoming event, please contact Dr. Yvette Branson at Yvette.Branson@va.gov.

